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Book 18



IN MEMORY
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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A D D R E S S

DELIVERED ON THE

SABBATH FOLLOWING THE ASSASSINATION

OF

PRESIDENT LINCOLN,

IN THE

*Second Congregational Church,
GREENWICH, CONN.*

BY

REV. WILLIAM H. H. MURRAY.

NEW YORK:

JOHN F. TROW, PRINTER, 50 GREENE ST.
1865.

REV. WM. H. H. MURRAY,

DEAR SIR:—At a full meeting of members of the Second Congregational Society and other citizens, held this day, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to request of you a copy of your address delivered on the Sabbath following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, our beloved Chief Magistrate, at Washington. We take pleasure in presenting this request, for we believe the dissemination of the sentiments uttered on that occasion will aid in suppressing the spirit of rebellion in our land, furthering the ends of justice and securing permanent peace for our suffering nation.

P. BUTTON,
SANFORD MEAD,
WM. SMITH.

GREENWICH, April 19, 1865.

P. BUTTON, S. MEAD, W. SMITH,

GENTLEMEN:—In reply to your note, requesting a copy of my address of the 16th, for publication, I would say that if there is a general desire on the part of the public to have what was then said put in such a shape as to be preserved, I know of no reason why it should not be granted. You are pleased to express the belief that its sentiments recommend it to loyal men, and are such as to influence for good the reader. I trust such is the case. Nevertheless, it is but due to the writer to observe that he regards it not so much in the light of an argument as of a tribute. In it I aimed simply to give expression, in suitable language, to popular grief as it then was. The logical coherence of argument, needed to convince men's judgments on other occasions, is not to be found or expected here. Looking at it from this standpoint, I have not felt at liberty to remodel it, even when by so doing it might have been improved. The people are aware under what circumstances it was composed, and I preferred to leave it as it was delivered. I have deemed thus much due both to the people and myself, to whom, as to you, gentlemen, I am

Yours truly,

W. H. H. MURRAY.

A D D R E S S.

TO-DAY the wicked triumph and the good are brought low. Two days ago and the Republic stood erect, strong and reliant, her foot advanced and countenance radiant with hope. To-day she lies prostrate upon the ground, her features stained with the traces of recent grief, and her voice lifted in lamentation.

“The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places: How are the mighty fallen!”

President Lincoln is dead. The Chief Magistrate of the nation is departed. A good man has left us, and the hearts of the people are sad.

The nation grieves to-day as it has not grieved since the first President died. Nay, with a grief more poignant yet, for Washington lived till he could serve his country in public no longer; but Lincoln is removed at a time when it seems impossible to spare him. It is well, my friends, that ye have draped* your place of worship; for by so doing, ye sympathize with the public grief, and deprecate the judgments of God. Let these solemn emblems testify to all, that you obey the Apostolic injunction, to “weep with those that weep.” Let the symbol of our nation’s glory, as you behold it, crossed with mournful black, express, beyond the powers of speech, our sense of that nation’s loss. Let the unwonted silence of this crowded and hushed assembly, the mournful cadence of the anthem’s solemn voice, the grave expression of every thoughtful face, the tears that dim our eyes, be to-day

* The church had been draped in heavy mourning on Saturday.

our grief's interpreter, and say what words may not, nor lips express. For there are times when feelings exceed utterance, and spoken syllables, however gently worded, sound harshly on the ear.

This is no time to recount the history of the past. Its failures and successes call not for recital to-day; and yet, some retrospect is needed to teach us the lessons of the hour.

On the 4th of March, 1861, Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office, at Washington, and was inaugurated Chief Magistrate of the country. I need not rehearse the condition in which the nation then stood. The difficulties and embarrassments of the new President's position are known to all. On whatever side he turned, he met duplicity and treason. The Capitol stood as on a mine ready to be exploded. The train was laid, the match was lighted, and all the wicked enginery prepared.

What chance was there to foil the plotters? Thirty years of corrupt administration, adherence to false principles, and subserviency to designing men, had brought the Government to the brink of ruin. An unpardonable blindness had fallen on the people. The nation refused to credit the danger, though beneath them, as under the crust of a crater, might be heard the rumblings of the coming eruption. Though the air was thick with the cinders of gathering conflagration, our statesmen refused to believe there was peril. Thus, with a traitor at the head of every bureau, applying all the resources of the nation to forward their base designs, with an incredulity in his cabinet, and an apathy among the people, which deserved, as they received, the contempt of the world —upon the eve of such a tempest, and while the ship was already entering the breakers, Abraham Lincoln took the helm, and after four years of unremitting effort, with the blessing of God upon his endeavors, he had succeeded in rescuing it from immediate danger, and was directing its course to a safe and permanent haven.

At the close of the term of his first administration, he was again elected to the Presidential office, with a popular unanimity which gave an almost unprecedented endorsement both to his character and the wisdom of his policy.

During all these years, and amid all his trials, he bore himself with such becoming dignity, exhibiting such steadfast faithfulness, such sincerity of purpose, such freedom from passion, such reliance on the Divine will, such sympathy with the oppressed, that the world grew to respect and the nation to revere him. His conduct silenced his opposers and conciliated his enemies, and the name of Abraham Lincoln will pass into history, with a popular unanimity rare to behold, as that of a sincere patriot, a wise ruler, and a noble man.

Alas, that we must proceed ! Why may we not here pause ! Why is so hard a duty imposed on me as to declare, or so painful a task on you as to hear, the awful recital of his death ! Last Friday evening, by the hand of an assassin, this man, so much beloved, whose life seemed so essential to the public weal, was cruelly murdered—murdered by the very men for whom his voice had always pleaded forgiveness.

There have been assassinations of public men before this, but never one so useless. What end was there to gain by murdering Lincoln ? What reason can be given for this woful waste of precious blood ? I answer, none. It was the act of devilish spite, of blind and fiendish hate against the loyal North. The man was nothing save as a representative. He was our agent, and as our agent he was slain. The selfsame spirit that fired on Sumter four years ago, last Friday shot our President. The lesson of this event is therefore plain. None but a knave who will not, or a fool who cannot, need fail to understand it. It reveals to us the deep depravity and devilish perseverance of the men waging war upon the nation's life. Theirs is no ordinary hostility—no common enmity. Their hate resembles the hatred of devils ; it does not reason ; it cannot be propitiated. Its motto is “rule or ruin.” As a people, we have been slow to realize this. Cherishing no hatred toward the South, we have refused to be persuaded that it were otherwise with them. The least reflection will show us our error. Remember how surroundings make the man. Cruelty comes first by habit, afterward by blood. The circumstances of the Southern people have made them tyrants. The upas of secession was planted

by Calhoun. Assassination is the natural mode of expression to uncontrolled yet cowardly passion. To beat women and kill men has been the pastime of gentlemen at the South for forty years. State statute guaranteed this privilege to every man of property and standing. The boys were taught to despise the hoe and use the whip. Disregard of human life became universal. To stab a man was nothing, especially if he was black. Picture now such a people, educated into cruelty and revenge by years of uncontrolled indulgence; vain, conceited, malignant, hating whoever opposed them; and then picture that same people, thwarted as they have been by us at the North, beaten by the very ones whose prowess they despised, and their bitterness appears at once not only possible but natural. We cease to wonder, when we remember these things, at the cruelty practised upon our soldiers taken by them in battle. From Jefferson Davis down to the hyenas that guarded the pens at Andersonville, all were filled with fiendish rancor.

Each soldier in blue was a representative of that North they hated, and on him they wreaked their vengeance. The leaders at Richmond experienced keen delight, as week by week last summer, commandants at the Southern prisons forwarded their weekly reports, how, in obedience to orders received from headquarters, the Yankee prisoners were being starved to death by the thousand. Ah, what a spectacle will heaven and earth behold, when, in obedience to their last summons, those forty thousand skeleton forms shall rise from out the trenches where rebel hands flung them with cursing, and stand marshalled in dread array—an army of witnesses against their murderers! Will men in view of this dare say that mercy, human or divine, can plead for those who not only did this deed, but who, instead of showing repentance, openly boast and glory in their guilt?

Does the impenitent and boastful sinner find pardon at God's hand? Does He whose throne is built on adamantine justice greet with sweet complacency and loving favor the men who live to kill? Is there in heavenly judgments no difference between the innocent and the guilty? Are the rebellious and the loyal re-

garded in the same light by Him who rewarded Abdiel with everlasting glory, but bound with chains of fire the rebel angels in hell? And will men so blaspheme and wickedly misquote His holy word as to claim that God enjoins on men a mercy that He could never practise himself? Such are not my views of heaven and God. My Bible teaches me there is a place of torment for the wicked; and for the good, reward. I believe there is on earth a needed imitation of that justice which is above, by which society is protected and government upheld. I believe that the prison and the scaffold are not cruel, but humane establishments, because within their shadow only can innocence and unprotected wealth be secure from the lawlessness of lust and robbery. And, moreover, I believe, and were I alone in the belief, I would maintain it against the world—I believe, I say, there is a perceptible difference between a law-abiding citizen and a lawless rebel, between the man who defends the liberties of his fatherland, and those who plot and kill to overthrow them. Pardon I plead in God's name for every truly penitent rebel. Forgiveness for the ignorant masses who knew not what they did. But exile or the gibbet for the boastful, persevering scoundrels who enjoyed the honors of our Government for thirty years, and then turned round and, unprovoked, waged war upon it.

If now what I have said, in reference to the leaders of this rebellion, be true—and that it is let this draped altar and the adornments of solemn black bear witness—what is our duty, or the lesson of this death? Is it not this? That, if our President, thus slain by treason, is removed, each man must constitute himself his country's guard. Each child of the Republic must be her sentinel, and keep strict watch and ward. Each citizen must lay aside his prejudices, and stand the firmer for the Right.

But do not so far err as to mistake the author of this crime. Do not launch your anger, hissing hot, out on the renegade who faced the peril that others dared not face. What, pray, is he but the tool of others? A *willing* tool admit, but yet a tool. Think you this poor conspirator, who for nearly two long months has been watching his opportunity to do this deed, think you he had no backers?

Were there no other hands to dig the mine his bold act fired ? Did this third-rate actor take the destiny of nations in his hands, and plot a plot to shake the world ? Nay, history will not so write it. Behind this miserable assassin, this mad agent of cooler heads, stand a throng of sympathizers. Over his shoulder you can see a crowd of old familiar faces. Davis, Breckinridge, Bragg, Lee, these are the true assassins. These are they who bribed this hanger-on at theatres to kill the man by whose consistent counsels their schemes were steadily baffled, and their dream of power delayed. The men who sat at Richmond, and starved our boys at Andersonville and Salisbury, have struck the life out of your President. Months ago, when Davis reigned in Virginia, and Lee held his own at Petersburg, this plot was laid.* Lincoln and his Cabinet were to be murdered on the 4th of March, the country left without a government, and inspired by our calamity the Southern leaders were to begin the spring campaign.

Thank God they then were foiled, and he who had so nobly borne the cares of office, and watched, through all our night of war, with sleepless eye our liberties, was spared until the clouds had parted, and the harbor seemed not far away.

But, alas ! the man we love is gone. The Republic stands as a mother who mourns her eldest son. Others she has as brave, others as wise, others perchance as true, but of them all what one can fill his place ?—the one on whom she leaned in her first trial, who warded off the blows rained at her by a savage mob when she lay prostrate, who raised her up, built her a fortress, and at the portal kept evermore his sleepless watch to thwart the throng of Catilines who sought her life, the simple-hearted, faithful man. Who can make good her loss ? Well may she be bewildered. The blow came with a suddenness that stunned her. She had not dreamed to dress his bier ; her thoughts were on his laurels. She asked not where to bury, but how to crown him.

* It should be remembered that this was written before any of the facts of the conspiracy since ascertained were published.

But this is not simply a national loss. General terms of grief fail to express our feelings. So well was the departed known, so familiar had his face become to us all, so strong was the hold which his honest words and bearing had taken on the popular heart, that we each feel a personal bereavement. Never before did a President receive such an outgoing of confidence and affection from the masses. To the rich and poor, to the high and low, he was "our President." Never before has our country been so profoundly moved. Eyes unused to weep, were wet as at the tidings of a brother's death. Faces unknown to grief grew grave. Men met and spoke as men may speak beside a bier. Women went to God in prayer, and children cried. "How is the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

The universality and sincerity of this grief on the part of the people are not to be wondered at; for he was of them. He was no professed statesman. He had not been educated into the mysteries and intrigues of statecraft. He climbed not to office through the slow and often dubious processes of party emolument. He neither intrigued for nor expected his nomination. He was not rich. He drew no support from the prestige of ancient families or renowned names. The nation took him from his village home as simple Abraham Lincoln, and placed him in the highest seat of power. How well he did fulfil his duty, let history tell. There have been larger minds than his, but few so evenly balanced. There have been greater orators than he, but few whose words were more convincing. There have been men of higher polish, but none so thoroughly American.

He was the child of our free institutions. Born in poverty where to be poor was degradation, he climbed to knowledge by his own unaided efforts and over obstacles which to others would have been insurmountable. In him, as in a flower blossomed before its time, do you behold the type of a character yet to become national. In no other country could he have been what he was. In no other country could he have had the experiences and the opportunities which fitted him by middle age to be what he has been. The Republic may justly, therefore, be regarded

as both his mother and his patron. She gave him his chance to rise. Her institutions, her maxims, nay her rivers, hills, and mighty plains contributed influences needed for his growth. In turn he loved her as his dearest friend. That love to-day is proven and the greatness of it. "For greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." This hath he done. To him the Republic gave all that was worthy in his life, and with that life his debt of gratitude is paid.

His advent upon the public stage was an era in our history. He brought to our councils firmness without bigotry and progression without license. The clearness of his judgments and the correctness of his conclusions were remarkable. By no labored deductions from the past did he arrive at the truths of the present.

Original and unique, he was wise beyond the wisdom of the schools. Born and bred among the masses, he could perceive and interpret the movement of the masses.

He risked nothing on bold inventions of his own. In every sense a representative of the people, he advanced no faster than the people. The exhibition of personal prominence he never courted. To others he was always ready to ascribe that honor without any reservation, which justly, in part, might be claimed by him. If he erred at all, it was in a direction in which a leader of parties is not apt to err, for such was the goodness of his heart that it is doubtful that any consideration, save detriment to the public interest, could cause him to refuse a favor though solicited by the ill-deserving; and perchance no public man in America has been so maligned and yet so free from bitterness.

One point there was upon which friend and foe, champion and opponent agreed,—the purity of his character and the blamelessness of his private life. These passed through the ordeal of two political campaigns fiercely contested, not only unscathed, but unattacked. In the plates of this harness there was no flaw. On the surface of this shield the keenest scrutiny could detect no stain. A faithful husband, an affectionate father, and an honest man.

He was a strong advocate of temperance. No liquor

touched his lips. Tobacco he never tasted. Of what other public man can these things be said? Who stands so free from blemish amid the vices of this age? Who has so long a list of virtues? I do not doubt he had his failings. I do not doubt that he made blunders. To err is human. He may have failed to act at times as quickly as the people wished or as was best. We do not claim for him perfection. But consider against what he had to contend, the difficulties of his station, the character of his agents, the confusion of the times. Run back in memory along the line of history for the past four years, and see how seldom he has erred, how few have been his extravagancies, how successful, judged by popular indorsement, have been his measures, how he has grown not only in our confidence, but in the respect of foreign nations. Within the past two months, orators of the Old World have pronounced him "the wonderful man of the New." Their hostile press at last has recognized the greatness of one whose magnanimity disarmed their prejudice and broke the weapons of their enmity; and even the council chambers of Europe, where sit the haughty managers of empires, have spoken with respect the name of him whose greatness was not derived "from loins enthroned or rulers of the earth."

But neither at home or abroad, by friend or foe, will his name be spoken again save as of one departed. In the prime of life, in the midst of his honors, in the full measure of health, he is snatched away. The means and manner of his death are known to all. I need not repeat the fearful story. Many of us have feared that the burden of public care would prove too much for his strength and that his health would break down under it, but none of us anticipated what has occurred. Could he have gone to his grave in the order of nature, could friends have watched beside his bed and soothed the pains of dissolving mortality, could he have breathed his life away in peace and left before he departed tokens of love to friends and words of counsel to his country, how different would have been our feeling! Then had we been to some degree prepared. Or could he have lived yet for a little while, until by his wise management the troubles of our country had

been quieted, and that happy hour arrived for which he longed and labored, when the authority of the Government shall be everywhere respected and peace secured, then might we have surrendered him, as one who lived his time and finished his full course. But that he should be stricken down in his full vigor, without a moment's warning, while in the midst of his labors, depriving him of that reward so richly deserved, the gratitude of an united and grateful people, this indeed is hard. This is the bitterness of our bitter grief. But God is wise. He orders all, and He orders what is best. The wicked deed of wicked men He shall overrule for their confusion and our good. Let us not, therefore, too deeply mourn that Lincoln is departed. He might have gone with more, but never with greener laurels, to the grave. His wreath is woven, and well woven too, both flower and leaf. He lived at least long enough to know that his labors were not in vain or unappreciated. He lived to see our arms victorious and the cause of liberty secure. He lived to make his peace with God, and leave to a stricken people the sweetest of all consolations.

Nor is he wholly gone. He lives ; not in bodily presence, but yet he lives—in the history of his times—in the memory of his age—in the affections of us all. His is a name that will not be forgotten. The living of to-day will tell it to the unborn, and they in turn will repeat it to the remotest age.

Amid the doings of the great of every clime will his deeds be recorded. Among the teachings of the wise will his sayings be written. In galleries, where wealth gathers the faces of the loved and the renowned, will his portrait be suspended, and in humbler homes and in lowlier hearts will his face and his memory be retained till the present has become the past, and the children cease to be moved by the traditions of the fathers. We cannot measure him to-day. Years must pass before his influence on his age can be estimated. It needs the contrast of history to reveal his greatness. It is only when some future Tacitus shall compare him, as the Roman did Agricola, with the emperors and kings of his day, that his meed can be awarded. Beside the Napoleons and Victorias of his age

will he not stand colossal ? In native vigor of intellect, in the sincerity of his purpose, in the originality of his views, in the simplicity of his faith, and in his sympathy for the oppressed, what potentate of his time will bear a comparison with this backwoodsman of America ? Untaught in the formalities of courts, he aped not their customs. Unostentatious, he aspired to nothing beyond his reach, and seemed to reach more than he aspired after. He was incapable of bitterness, and in this doth his greatness most appear, that having defamers he heeded them not, persecuted by enemies he hated them not, reviled by inferiors he retorted not.

But here I feel as though I must pause. Our grief, great as it is, is lost beside a larger woe. A million dusky faces rise up before me aghast with terror. The poor down-trodden slave, the lone and wretched bondman, upon whose swarthy lips, whether quivering beneath the torture of the lash or parted in the ecstasy of prayer, one name was ever found—that name, the man’s that’s gone. Who shall make good his place to him ? The freedmen too—who shall be Abraham Lincoln unto them ? Through all this weary struggle that name has been treasured in their hearts. To these abused and cheated ones, whose only crime has been their color, he seemed a saviour. An undefined yet holy sympathy has linked them unto the sympathetic man. In him, with faith that may prove prophecy, they thought they saw the “Coming of the Lord.” And now their Friend is gone. Their star, while yet in full meridian, is suddenly extinguished in the heavens. What lamentations will ascend o’er all the South as this news flies ! The white and the black will mourn together for once. Their long-lost brotherhood is found at last in grief.

My friends, here will we pause. I have attempted to express the public grief, but I have found it beyond expression. The solemn-sounding organ, the mournful tolling of the bell, this funeral drapery, these outward badges of an inward woe can alone make known our sorrow. Dumb and mute though they be, yet by such

manifestations does the o'erburdened heart declare its bereavement, and find relief.

From this house, impressed by these surroundings, let us go forth relying on God for strength and guidance in the days to come. Do not despair. Be not despondent. The Republic must never fall into the hands of traitors. Concession avails not in times like these, and with desperate men.

Act your part like men, too brave to be subdued, too wise to be cajoled.

By the memory of your fathers, with whose blood American liberty was first purchased, by the sufferings of your sons, slain while fighting that it might be preserved, by the lifeless body of your murdered President, killed by the instigations of public enemies, I charge you not to give o'er this contest till you have vindicated your right to manhood, and fenced the future round and secured it against treason and assassination in all time to come, if it must needs be, with a wall of gibbets. May God stay the necessity of the further shedding of blood ! I pray to-day as I always have, that the mind of our enemy may be changed, that remorse may visit their hearts, that they may see their errors and repent. But if this is not to be, if they persist and yield only when successful resistance is no longer possible, if their repentance is that of a captured assassin and not of a returning prodigal, then, I say, let justice, with face like granite and sword of fire, have full and freest sweep. Leave not a single man to break the laws or murder Presidents hereafter. And those proud palaces and broad plantations, builded and tilled by the unrequited toil of those who since have died in our behalf, let these, I say, be taken from their unworthy owners and given to men and the children of men who have fought and laid down their lives for liberty and law. Mercy to a few is at this time cruelty to the many. Anarchy must not be risked to gratify a questionable charity.

Let us therefore give unto him who by this death has legally become the nation's head, not merely obedience, which is our bounden duty, but our sympathies and our prayers. Like Lincoln when he was first inaugurated, he is an untried man. Like him, he is a self-made man.

Like him, he may become the honored man. Let us not forget, in the remembrance of how he once did fall, how much the nation owes him for long years of loyal service. Let us heed the advice of him whose lips will never more utter their homely wisdom, when he said, after his inauguration, to a gentleman who was alluding to the Vice-President's painful condition ! "Sir, Andrew Johnson is too much of a man for the American people to throw overboard for one error."

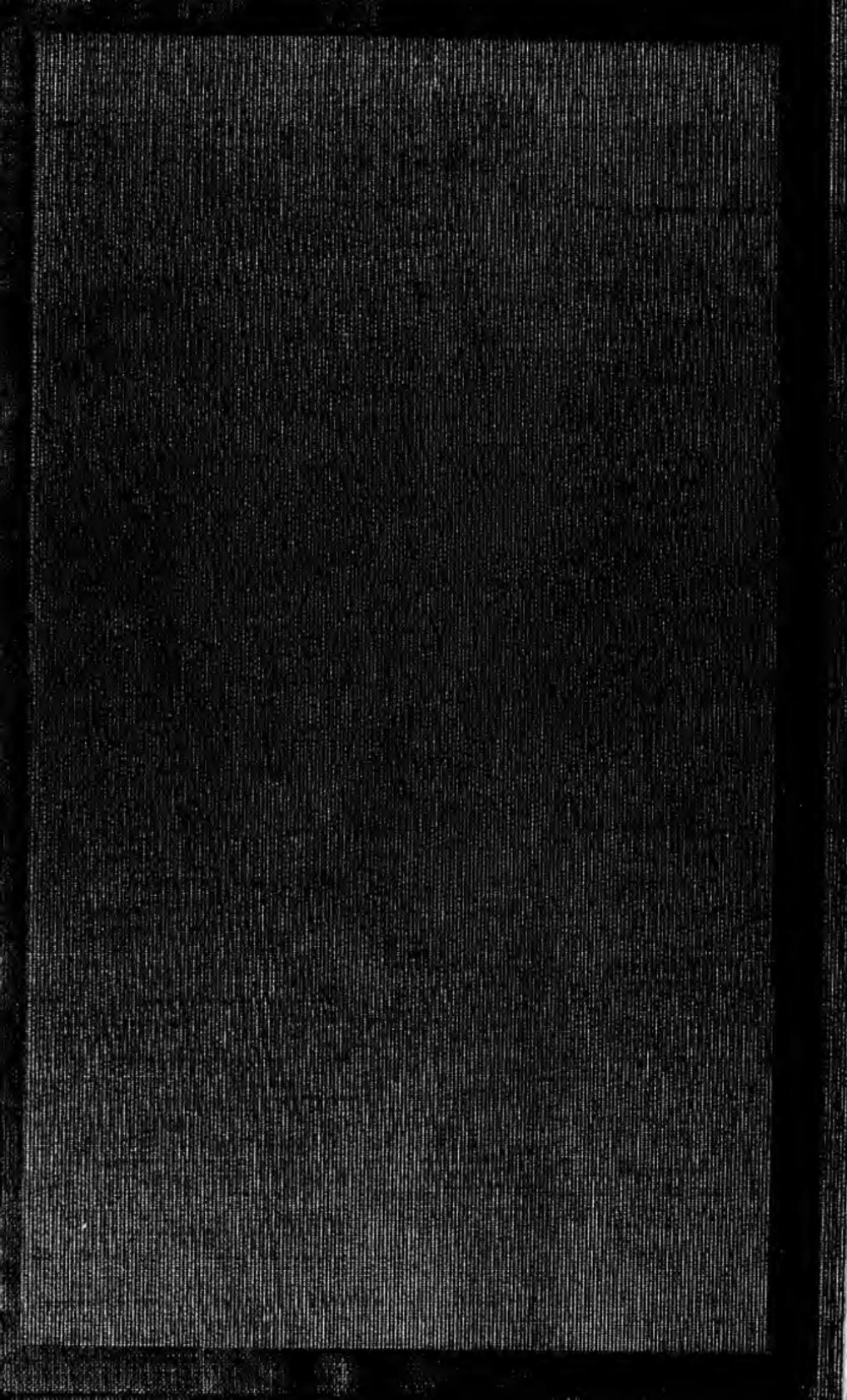
God grant his estimation of the man may be the true one, and unto us may He give wisdom to know and hearts to do our duty, and in the fulness of time unto the rulers purity, and to the nation peace.

Farewell, thou martyred hero. The days will pass, these tokens of our grief will be removed ; but never from our history will the memory of him we mourn be taken. His name will grow in honor with the years. The future will bring their garlands to his grave and garnish his sepulchre. Of him will songs be written and eulogies be made. A grateful people shall testify their gratitude in marble o'er his mound, and on it carve his greatness and their love. The fashion of his features, faithfully shaped in bronze, shall endure unto all ages :

" For thou art Freedom's now, and Fame's ;
One of the few, the immortal names
That were not born to die,"

But while we mourn our loss, let us not forget those who mourn a greater. The wife, the mother of his boys —what is our grief to hers ? Or those who bear his name, and found in him their guide—who to them shall fill a father's place ?

Pray, ye who love the Lord and pity the bereaved, pray that God will be a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless. For them we plead the consolations of the Gospels. For them our prayers ascend. God grant them peace beyond the giving of the world, and teach them in faith to bow with us and say, "the Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away ; blessed be the name of the Lord."





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